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Good News for the CIA

For the Central Intelligence Agency,

which has been going through a difficult period, the appointment of Richard M. Helms to succeed William F. Raborn as director is a heartening development.

The new director, who has served as Raborn's deputy for the past 13 months, is the first thoroughgoing professional intelligence agent to be given the top job in the agency. He has been with the CIA since it was formed in 1947, having previously served in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. He is widely respected throughout the government intelligence community and enjoys excellent relations on Capitol Hill.

The appointment amounts to belated recognition in the White House that intelligence work is a highly speci-

alized activity demanding the best in professional talent. Raborn, a retired vice admiral, was handicapped as director by his lack of previous experience in intelligence work and in the field of foreign affairs. In recent months, criticism of the CIA in Congress has become increasingly outspoken and morale within the agency itself has suffered.

The change in leadership does not mean that all the problems of the CIA will disappear. Criticism in Congress, and pressure for tighter supervision by congressional committees, is likely to continue. It is to be hoped, however, that increased confidence within the agency itself may lead in time to greater public and congressional confidence in the activities of this vital arm of the government.